The Story of The Sun 1833 to 1918

Decline of Personal Journalism and Mr. Dana's Opinion of Greeley, the Elder Bennett and Henry J. Raymond

Work of "The Sun" for the Public Interest in Exposing Scandals, Especially Those of President Grant's Time

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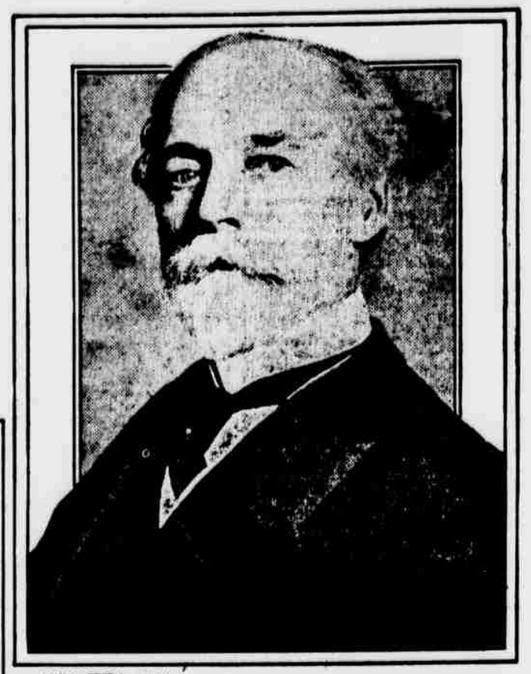

WHITELAW REID

This is the fourteenth of a series of articles narrating the history of THE SUN, and giving a vital, intimate view of metropolitan life and journalism during more than eighty eventful years. The first article told of the founding of the paper by Benjamin H. Day in September, 1833, and of its rapid rise to success. Succeeding articles told of the paper's continued prosperity and of changes in ownership, including its purchase by Charles A. Dana, and then sketched Mr. Dana's career and described the group of able men who made THE SUN the best newspaper in America.

By FRANK M. O'BRIEN.

"There will never be an end to the personality of journalism." It is curious to note in passing that as this is written Henry Watterson, quite as prolific at seventy-seven as he was then at thirty-three, is the last of the men who, according to the measure of forty years ago, were looked upon as "personal journalists." "Dana says," "Greeley says," "Raymond says"—such oral credits are no longer given by the readers of the really big and reputable newspapers of New York to the men who write opinions. "Henry Watterson says" is the last of the phrases of that style.

Dana believed in personal journalism and thought it would not pass away. A few days after the death of Horace Greeley the editor of THE SUN printed his views on the subject:

A great deal of twaddle is uttered by some country newspapers just now over what they call personal journalism. They say that now that Mr. Bennett, Mr. Raymond and Mr. Greeley are dead the day for personal journalism is gone by, and that impersonal journalism will take its place. That appears to be a sort of journalism in which nobody will ask who is the editor of a paper or the writer of any class of article, and nobody will care.

Whenever in the newspaper profession a man rises up who is original, strong and bold enough to make his opinions a matter of consequence to the public there will be personal journalism; and whenever newspapers are conducted only by commonplace individuals whose views are of no interest to the world and of no consequence to anybody there will be nothing but impersonal journalism.

And this is the essence of the whole question.

For all that, Dana must have felt lonely, for at that moment, at any rate, the new chiefs of THE SUN'S rivals did not measure up to the heights of their predecessors. To Dana the trio that had passed were men worthy of his steel, and worthy, each in his own way, of admiration. Toward Greeley, in spite of the circumstances under which Dana left the *Tribune*, the editor of THE SUN showed a kindly spirit; not only in his support of Greeley for the Presidency, which may have sprung from Dana's aversion to Grantism, but in his general attitude toward the brilliant if erratic old man. As for Bennett, Dana frankly believed him to be a great newspaper man and never hesitated to say so.

Passing of Three Famous Men.

What Dana thought of the three may be judged by his editorial article in THE SUN on the day after Greeley's funeral:

In burying Mr. Greeley we bury the third founder of a newspaper which has become famous and wealthy in this city during the last thirty-five years. Mr. Raymond died three years and Mr. Bennett barely six months ago.

These three men were exceedingly unlike each other, yet each of them possessed extraordinary professional talents. Mr. Raymond surpassed both Mr. Bennett and Mr. Greeley in the versatility of his accomplishments and in facility and smoothness as a writer. But he was less a journalist than either of the other two. Nature had rather intended him for a lawyer, and success as a legislative debater and presiding officer had directed his ambition toward that kind of life.

Mr. Bennett was exclusively a newspaper man. He was equally great as a writer, a wit, and a purveyor of news; and he never showed any desire to leave a profession in which he had made himself rich and formidable.

Horace Greeley delighted to be a maker of newspapers, not so much for the thing itself, though to that he was sincerely attached, as for the sake of promoting doctrines, ideas and theories in which he was a believer; and his personal ambition, which was very profound and never inoperative, made him wish to be Governor, legislator, Senator, Cabinet Minister, President, because such elevation seemed to afford the clearest possible evidence that he himself was appreciated and that the cause he espoused had gained the hearts of the people. How incomplete, indeed, would be the triumph of any set of principles if their chief advocate and promoter were to go unrecognized and unhonored!

It is a most impressive circumstance that each of these three great journalists has had to die a tragic and pitiable death. One perished by apoplexy long after midnight in the entrance of his own home; another closed his eyes with no relative near him to perform that last sad office; and the third, broken down by toils, excitements and sufferings too strong to be borne, breathed his last in a private madhouse. What a lesson to the possessors of power, for these three men were powerful beyond others! What a commentary upon human greatness, for they were rich and great, and were looked upon with envy by thousands who thought themselves less fortunate than they! And amid such startling surprises and such a prodigious conflict of lights and shadows the curtain falls as the tired actor, crowned with long applause, passes from that which seems to that which is.

Louis J. Jennings succeeded Raymond as the editor of the *Times*, and acted as such until 1876, when he returned to England, his desk being taken by John Foord. Jennings went into politics in England and was elected a Member of Parliament. He also wrote a life of Gladstone and edited a collection of Lord Randolph Churchill's speeches.

Bennett was followed in the possession of the *Herald* by his son and namesake. Whitelaw Reid took Greeley's place at the head of the *Tribune*. Dana did not like Reid in those days. In a "Survey of Metropolitan Journalism" which appeared in the editorial columns of THE SUN on September 3, 1875—THE SUN'S forty-second birthday—Dana dismissed his neighbor of the then "tall tower" with—

We pass the *Tribune* by. Our opinion of it is well known. It is Jay Gould's paper, and a disgrace to journalism.

Dana's Esteemed Contemporaries.

Dana's attitude toward the other big newspapers was more kindly:

The *Times* is a very respectable paper, and more than that, a journal of which the Republican party has reason to be proud. It is not a servile organ, but a loyal partisan. We prefer for our own part to keep aloof from the party politicians. They are disagreeable fellows to have hanging about a newspaper office, and their advice we do not regard as valuable. But we do not decry party newspapers. They have their field, and must always exist. The *Times* is a creditable example of such a newspaper. It would be better, however, if Mr. Jennings himself wrote the whole editorial page.

The mistake of the *Times* was in lapsing into the dulness of respectable conservatism after its Ring fight. It should have kept on and made a crusade against frauds of all sorts.

The *Herald* has improved since young Mr. Bennett's return. We are attracted toward this son of his father. He has a passion for manly sports, and that we like. If the shabby writers who make jest of his walking matches had an income of three or four hundred thousand dollars a year, perhaps they would drive in carriages instead of walking and dawdle away their time on beds of ease or the gorgeous sofas of the Lotos Club. Mr. Bennett does otherwise. He strides up Broadway with the step of an athlete, dons his navy blue and commands his yacht, shoots pigeons, and prefers the open air of Newport to the confinement of the *Herald* office.

The *World* is a journal which pleases us on many accounts . . . but occasionally there is a bit of prurient wit in its columns that might better be omitted. The *World* is also too often written in too fantastic language. Its young men seem to vie with each other in tormenting the language. They will do better when they learn that there is more force in simple Anglo-Saxon than in all the words they can manufacture. We advise them to read the Bible and Common Prayer Book. Those books will do their souls good, anyway, and they may also learn to write less affectedly.

THE SUN was as frank in discussing its own theories and ambitions as it was in criticising its contemporaries for dulness and poor writing. Dana's dream, never to be realized, was a newspaper without advertising. He believed that by getting all the news, condensing it into the smallest readable space, and adding such literary matter as the readers' tastes demanded, a four page paper might be produced with a reasonable profit from the sales, after paper and ink, men and machinery, had been paid for.

A Paper Without Advertisements.

An editorial article in THE SUN on March 13, 1875, was practically a prospectus of this idea:

Until Robert Bonner sagaciously foresaw a handsome profit to be realized by excluding advertisements and crowding a small sheet with such choice literature as would surely attract a mighty throng of readers, never did the owner of any serial publication so much as dream of making both ends meet without a revenue from advertisements. The *Tribune*, the *Times* and the *Herald* at length ceased to expect a profit from their circulation, and then they came to care for large editions only so far as they served to attract advertisers.

It was then that THE SUN conceived the idea of a daily newspaper that should yield more satisfactory dividends from large circulation than had ever been declared by the journals that had looked to the organism of political parties and to enterprising advertisers for the bulk of their income. It saw in New York a city of sufficient population to warrant the experiment of a two cent newspaper whose cost should equal that of the four cent dailies in every respect, the cost of white paper alone excepted. Accordingly we produced THE SUN on a sheet that leaves a small margin for profit, and by restricting the space allotted to advertisers and eliminating the verbiage in which the eight page dailies hide the news, we made room in THE SUN for not only all the real news of the day, but for interesting literature and current political discussion as well.

It was an enterprise that the public encouraged with avidity. The edition rapidly rose to one hundred and twenty thousand copies daily, and it is now rising; while the small margin of profit on that enormous circulation makes THE SUN able to exist without paying any special attention to advertising—approaching very closely, in fact, to the condition of a daily newspaper able to support itself on the profits of its circulation alone.

Only a single further step remains to be taken. That step was recently foreshadowed in a leader in which THE SUN intimated that the time was not far distant in which it would reject more advertising than it would accept. With a daily circulation of fifty or a hundred thousand more, there is little doubt that THE SUN would find it necessary to limit the advertisers as the reporters and other writers for its columns are limited, each to a space to be determined by the public interest in his subject.

It will be a long stride in the progress of intellectual as distinguished from commercial journalism, and THE SUN will probably be the first to make it, thus distancing the successors of Raymond, Bennett, and Greeley in the great sweepstakes for recognition as the Journal of the Future.

It must be remembered, in recalling the failure of Dana's dream of a paper *sans* advertising, that his mind was not usually the port of vain dreams. He was a practical man, with more business sense than any other editor of his time, Bennett alone excepted. In him imagination had not swallowed arithmetic, and there is no possible doubt that he had good reason to believe in the practicability of the programme he so candidly outlined to his readers. It was part and parcel of his faith in a four page newspaper—a faith so strong, so well grounded on results, that for the first twenty years of the Dana regime THE SUN never appeared in more than four pages, except in emergencies.

In the end, of course, the scheme was beaten by the very excellence of its originator's qualities. THE SUN, by its popularity, drew more and more advertising. By its good English, its freedom from literary shackles, and the spirit of its staff, it attracted more and more writers of distinction, each unwilling to be denied his place in THE SUN. Dana always had unlimited space for a good story, just as the cat had an insatiable appetite for a bad one; and thus, through his own genius, he destroyed his own dream, but not without having almost proved that it was possible of realization.

A Believer in Brevity.

Dana believed that most of the newspapers of his day—particularly in the '70s—were tiring out not only the reader, but the writer. Commenting on a decline in the newspaper business in the summer of 1875, THE SUN said:

Some of our big contemporaries have been overdoing the thing. They seem to think that to secure circulation it is necessary to overload the stomachs of their readers.

The American newspaper reader demands of an editor that he shall not give him news and discussions in heavy chunks, but so condensed and clarified that he shall be relieved of the necessity of wading through a treatise to get at a fact, or spending time on a dilated essay to get a bite at an argument.

Six or seven dreary columns are filled with leading articles, no matter whether there are subjects to discuss of public interest, or brains at hand to treat them. Our big contemporaries exhaust their young men and drive them too hard. The stock of ideas is not limitless, even in a New York newspaper office.

Another thing has been bad. Men with actual capacity of certain sorts for acceptable writing have been frightened off from doing natural and vigorous work by certain newspaper critics and doctrinaires who are in distress if the literary proprieties are seemingly violated, and if the temper and blood of the writer actually show in his work. They measure our journalistic productions by an English standard, which lays it down as its first and most imperative rule that editorial writing shall be free from the characteristics of the writer. This is ruinous to good writing, and damaging to the sincerity of writers.

If we choose to glow or cry out in indignation, we do so, and we are not a bit frightened at the sound of our own voice.

Dana himself had that peculiar faculty, as indescribable as instinct, of knowing, when he saw an article in the paper, just how much work the author of it had put in—particularly in cases where the labor had been in leaving out, rather than in writing. As a result of this intuition he never drove his men. He would accept three lines or three columns for a day's work, and his admiration might go out more heartily to the three lines. As for the appearance of characteristics in men's writing, that was as necessary, in Dana's opinion, as it was wicked in the judgment of the ancient editors.

The first ten years of Dana's service on THE SUN were marked by the uprooting of many public evils. To use the mild phrasing of the historian John Fiske, "Villains sometimes succeeded in imposing upon President Grant, who was an honest, simple hearted soldier without much knowledge of the ways of the world." To say it more concretely, hardly a department of the national Government but was alive with fraud. THE SUN, which had supported Grant in the election of 1868, turned against his administration in its first months, and for years it continued to keep before the public the revelations of corruption—which were easily made, so bold were the scoundrels, so coarse their manner of theft.

A Long List of Scandals.

Among the scandals which THE SUN either brought to light or was most vigorous in assailing, these were the principal:

The Crédit Mobilier Scandal—This involved the names of many Senators and Representatives who were accused of accepting stock in the Credit Mobilier of America, the fiscal company organized to build the Union Pacific Railroad, as a reward for using their influence and votes in favor of the great enterprise.

The Navy Department Scandal—In this THE SUN accused George M. Robeson, Secretary of the Navy, of having permitted double payments to contractors and of violating the law in making large purchases without competitive bidding. Mr. Dana appeared as a witness in the Congressional investigation of Robeson, who, in the end, while not convicted of personal corruption, was censured for the laxity of his official methods.

The Whiskey Ring—This evil combination cheated the Government out of millions of dollars. It was made up of distillers, wholesale liquor dealers and employees of the Internal Revenue Office, these conspiring together to avoid the payment of the liquor tax. The first attack on the corrupt alliance was made in THE SUN of February 3, 1872, in an article by "Sappho," one of THE SUN'S Washington correspondents. Other great newspapers took up the fight, but THE SUN was the chief aggressor. As a result of the exposure 238 men were indicted and many of them, including the chief clerk of the Treasury Department, were sent to prison.

"Addition, Division and Silence"—On March 20, 1867, W. H. Kemble, State Treasurer of Pensylvania and one of the Republican bosses, wrote the following letter to Titian J. Coffey, a lawyer and claim agent in Washington:

MY DEAR TITIAN:

Allow me to introduce to you my particular friend, Mr. George O. Evans. He has a claim of some magnitude that he wishes you to help him in. Put him through as you would me. He understands addition, division, and silence.

W. H. KEMBLE.

When this letter fell into the hands of THE SUN, which had already made war on the ring formed for the collection of war claims, it saw in Kemble's last four words the sententious platform of widespread fraud. It printed the letter, and kept on printing it, with that iteration which Dana knew was of value in a crusade. In a few months the whole country was familiar with the phrase so suggestive of plunder.

Kemble was a politician with a thick skin, but he at last became so enraged at the repetition of "addition, division and silence," whether uttered by street urchins or printed all over America as the watchword of corruption—"honest graft" he would have called it if that phrase had then been common—that he sued out a writ of criminal libel against Mr. Dana and had him arrested as he was passing through Philadelphia. The only result of this was to make the phrase more common than ever.

Kemble was afterward convicted of trying to bribe Pennsylvania legislators and was sent to prison for a year.

The Post Trader Scandal—William W. Belknap, Grant's Secretary of War, was charged with receiving from Caleb P. Marsh $1,500 in consideration for the appointment of John S. Evans to maintain a trading establishment at Fort Sill, in the Indian Territory. The scandal came to the surface through the remark of Mrs. Belknap that Mrs. Evans would have no place in society, "as she is only a post trader's wife," and the retort of Mrs. Evans upon hearing of this that "a post trader's wife is as good as the wife of an official who takes money for the appointment of a post trader."

THE SUN laid the story of bribery wide open and the Senate proceeded to impeach the Secretary of War. He escaped punishment by resigning his office, twenty-five Senators voting "not guilty" on the ground that Belknap's resignation technically removed him from the Senate's jurisdiction. Thirty-five Senators voted "guilty," but a two-thirds vote was necessary to punish.

The Salary Grab—This was the act of Congress of March 3, 1873, which raised the President's salary from $25,000 to $50,000 and the salaries of Senators and Representatives from $5,000 to $7,500. Its evil lay not in the increases but in the retroactive clause which provided that each Congressman should receive $5,000 as extra pay for the two year term then ending. The assaults of THE SUN and other newspapers so aroused public indignation that Congress was obliged to repeal the act in January, 1874, and many members returned their share of the spoil to the Treasury.

The Boss Shepherd Scandal—THE SUN printed an article from Washington accusing Alexander Shepherd, vice-president of the Board of Public Works of the District of Columbia, and Henry D. Cooke, Governor of the District, with having a financial interest in the Metropolitan Paving Company, which had many street contracts in the national capital. Shepherd and Cooke laid a complaint of criminal libel against Mr. Dana, and an Assistant District Attorney of the District of Columbia came to New York and procured from United States Commissioner Davenport a warrant for the editor's arrest.

It was the intent of the prosecution to hale Dana to a Washington police court, where he would be tried without a jury. Dana had gone willingly, even eagerly, to Washington when summoned in the Robeson case, but the Shepherd strategy was so manifestly an attempt to railroad him that an appeal was taken to the Federal Court for the Southern District of New York. The historic decision of the district Judge—Samuel Blatchford, subsequently promoted to the United States Supreme Court—may be summed up in one of its paragraphs:

The Constitution says that all trials shall be by jury, and the accused is entitled not to be first convicted by a court and then to be convicted by a jury, but to be convicted or acquitted *in the first instance* by a jury.

As THE SUN said of this decision, important to the freedom of the individual as well as to that of the press:

Those who sought to murder liberty, where they looked for a second Jeffreys, found a second Mansfield.

The Safe Burglary Conspiracy—Columbus Alexander, a reputable citizen of Washington, was active in the movement to smash the Washington contractors' ring. He sought to bring certain contractors' books into court and exposed the false set that was produced. The ringsters hired a man to go to Mr. Alexander with a story that he could bring him the genuine books. Then the gang, which included men in the secret service departments of the Government, placed some of the genuine books in the safe of the District Attorney's office and employed three profesional burglars to blow open the safe.

The books, taken from the safe, were carried to Alexander's home by the man who had approached him. Close behind came police, who were prepared to arrest Alexander as soon as he received the "stolen property." He was to be accused of hiring the burglars to crack the District Attorney's safe. But the hour was early in the morning, Alexander was sleeping the deep sleep of the just, and the criminal rang his door bell in vain.

The ringsters then "arrested" the "thief," and caused him to sign a false confession, accusing Alexander; but the failure of their theatricals had broken the hireling's nerve as well as their own, and the conspiracy collapsed. Two of the hired criminals turned State's evidence at the trial, but the powerful politicians of the ring were able to bring about a disagreement of the jury.

Was Dana an Office Seeker?

These were the greatest of the scandals which THE SUN exposed in its news columns and denounced on its editorial page. It was the cry of the ringsters, and even of some honest men, that THE SUN'S assaults on the evils that marred Grant's administration were the result of Dana's personal dislike of the President. More specifically it was declared that Dana was a disappointed office seeker, and that the place of collector of customs at the port of New York was the office he sought.

We have it on the unimpeachable testimony of General James Harrison Wilson, the biographer of Dana, and, with Dana, a biographer of Grant, that General Rawlins, Grant's most intimate friend, told Dana's associates, and particularly General Wilson, that Dana was to be appointed collector. There is no evidence that Dana ever asked Grant, or any other man, for public office. One place, that of appraiser of merchandise at the port of New York, was offered him, and he refused it. THE SUN said editorially, replying to an insinuation made by the *Commercial Advertiser*, that if Dana had been made collector his paper would not denounce the Administration:

The idea that the editor of THE SUN, which shines for all, could consent to become collector of the port of New York is extravagant and inadmissible. It would be stepping down and out with a vengeance.

And yet we do not mean that the collector of New York need be other than an upright man. Moses H. Grinnell was such, and Tom Murphy, though a politician, a crony of Boss Grant, and one of the donors of Boss Grant's cottage, certainly never took a dollar of money from the Federal Treasury to which it was not entitled. General Arthur, the present collector, is a gentleman in every sense of the word.

The office of collector is respectable enough, but it is not one that the editor of THE SUN could desire or take without deserving to have his conduct investigated by a proceeding *de lunatico*.

Dana and THE SUN lost friends because of the assaults on Grantism. The warfare was bitter and personal. In the case of Belknap, for instance, THE SUN was attacking a man whom Dana, having known him as a good soldier, had recommended for appointment as Secretary of War. But it must be recalled that at the very height of his antagonism to Grant the President, Dana never receded from his opinion that Grant, the General, was the Union's greatest soldier. And THE SUN was quick to applaud him as President when, as in currency matters, he took a course which Dana considered right.

Controversies of the '70s.

The friends of Grant, nevertheless, turned against Dana and his paper. Some of them, stockholders in the Sun Printing and Publishing Association, quit the concern when they found themselves unable to turn Dana from his purpose. All their pleadings were vain.

"A few years from now," Dana would reply, "I shall be willing to accept whatever judgment the nation passes on my course of action; but now I must do as I think right."

So far as the material prosperity of THE SUN was concerned, the desertion of Grant's friends hurt it not a whit. For every reader lost, four or five were won. Men may stop reading a paper because it disgusts them; they rarely quit it because it is wounding them.

"I don't read THE SUN," said Henry Ward Beecher during his trial, "and don't allow anybody to read it to me. What's the good of a man sticking pins into himself?"

THE SUN made this reply to Beecher's assertion:

Everybody reads THE SUN—the good, that they may be stimulated to do better; the bad, in fear and trembling lest their wickedness shall meet its deserts.

In Beecher's case, as in Grant's, THE SUN believed that it was doing a public service in laying open wrongful conditions. In answer to one who criticised its brutal candor about the Plymouth Church scandal THE SUN said:

The exposure of the moral nastiness in Brooklyn is a salutary thing. If, when the exposure of the scandal took place, the people had been indifferent—as indifferent as Beecher assumed to be—and had received no shock to their sense of purity and propriety, then the Jeremiahs might well have bewailed the turpitude of society and prophesied evil things for the country. Then, indeed, the poison would have been in the whole social atmosphere. . . .

The Plymouth pastor, if a guiltless man, has brought all this trouble on himself by his cowardly course in dealing with the accusations against him. . . .

If he is not a bold man, strong in the truth and in purity, what business has he to preach the religion of the apostles to his fellow men—he who distributed Sharp's rifles to the Kansas combatants with slavery, who denounced sin and bore his head high as a man of freedom of thought and action? To have kept himself consistent he should not have dallied with Tilton and Moulton in secret, but if entrenched in innocence he should have dragged out their slanders and torn to pieces their plans from the pulpit where he had preached courage under difficulties, divine faith under sorrow, and bold encounter with sin. This would soon have expelled the poison lurking in the social atmosphere, but Beecher did not do it.

Perhaps Beecher's thanks were not due to Dana, but Grant's surely were. It is impossible that scandals like those of the Whiskey Ring could have lain hidden forever. If they had not been exposed when they were they would have come to the top later, perhaps after Grant went out of office, and when his cry, "Let no guilty man escape!" would have been vain.

THE SUN'S fights against the scandals of the Grant period were no more bitter than its attacks on the frauds attending the Presidential election of 1876, although Dana had no cause for personal animosity toward Hayes. THE SUN'S chief Washington correspondent, A. M. Gibson, who handled many of the Grant scandals, wrote most of the news stories about the theft of the Presidency by Mr. Hayes's managers. He also published in book form an official history of the fraud.

Joseph Pulitzer, then newly come from the West, was assigned by Dana to cover the proceedings of the Electoral Commission in semi-editorial style. Pulitzer was later, in 1878, a European correspondent of THE SUN.

These scandals made good reading, but THE SUN was by no means content to feed its readers on investigations. It put a little bit of everything on their breakfast plates—the Moody and Sankey revivals, Mr. Keely's motor, which didn't work, and young Edison's multiple telegraph, which did; the baseball games of the days when Spalding pitched for Boston and Anson and Reach were at first and second base respectively for the Philadelphia Athletics; the presentation of a cup to John Cable Heenan, the prizefighter, as the handsomest and best dressed man at the ball of the Shandley Association; an interview with Joaquin Miller on Longfellow; the wiggles of the sea serpent off Swampscott; a ghost story from Long Island, with a beautiful spook lashed to the rigging of a spectral bark; the arrival of New York's first Chinese laundryman; Father Tom Burke's lectures on Ireland; the lectures of Tyndall on newly discovered phenomena of light; the billiard matches between Cyrille Dion and Maurice Daly; a tar and feathers party in Brooklyn—THE SUN skimmed the pan of life and served the cream for two cents.

Typical Headlines of "The Sun."

The familiar three story headline, which was first used by THE SUN on the day of Grant's inauguration, and which stayed the same until long after Mr. Dana's death, attracted readers with the magic of the headwriter's art: "The Skull in the Chimney," "Shaved by a Lady Barber," "A Man Hanged by Women," "Burned Alive for $5,000," "The Murder in the Well," "Death Leap in a Theatre," "An Aged Sinner Hanged," "The Duel in the Bedroom," "Horrors of a Madhouse," "A Life for a Love Letter"—none could glance at the compelling titles of THE SUN stories without remaining to read. They are still fascinating in an age when lady barbers would attract no attention and when American murderers are too well versed in sanitation to put their victims in wells.

A typical SUN of 1874 might contain, in its four pages, six columns about the Beecher-Tilton case; four columns of editorial articles; a letter from Eli Perkins (Melville DeLancey Landon) at Saratoga, declaring that the spa was standing still commercially because of its lack of good drinking water; a column, also from Saratoga, describing the defeat of Preakness by Springbok, the latest in the strange case of Charley Ross; a column headed "Life in the Metropolis—Dashes Here and There by THE SUN'S Reporters"; a column of "Sunbeams," a column about trout fishing, two columns of general news, and five columns of advertisements.

A Versatile Cosmopolitan.

Instead of Eli Perkins's letter there might be a critique by Leopold Damrosch, from Bayreuth, of Wagner's "Götterdämmerung," just presented; or a dissection, by "Monsieur X," of E. A. Sothern's *Dundreary*. "Monsieur X" was Napoleon Leon Thieblin, who was for years one of THE SUN'S most distinguished critics and essayists. He was that kind of newspaper man who could—and did—write on Saturday of the political views of Bismarck and on Sunday of the crowd at Coney Island.

Thieblin, who was of French blood, was born in St. Petersburg in 1834. He was graduated at the Russian Imperial Academy of Artillery, and commanded forty pieces of cannon at the siege of Sebastopol. At the close of the Crimean War he went to London and became a member of the staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, reporting for that journal the French side of the war with Germany in 1870-71 and the atrocities of the Commune, over the pen name of "Azamet Batuk."

He reported the Carlist war in Spain for the New York *Herald*, and then came to America to lecture, but Dana persuaded him to join THE SUN staff. He contributed to THE SUN many articles on foreign affairs, including a series on European journalism; "The Stranger's Note Book," which was made up of New York sketches; letters from the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, and the Wall Street letters signed "Rigolo."

In the "Sunbeams" column were crowded the vagrant wit and wisdom of the world. The items concerned everything from great men in European chancelleries to organ grinders in Nassau street:

The mules are all dying in Arkansas.

A printer in Texas has named his first born Brevier Fullfaced Jones.

Real estate is looking up at New Orleans.

Translations from Hawthorne are becoming popular in France.

Venison costs six cents a pound in St. Paul.

Queen Victoria says every third woman in Cork is a beauty.

Goldwin Smith is coming to the United States.

The Pope denounces short dresses.

The same terseness is seen in the "Footlight Flashes," begun in 1876:

Clara Morris takes her lapdog out for a daily drive.

Miss Claxton is meeting with indifferent success in "Conscience."

Not less than $30,000 was spent last evening in the theatres of New York.

John T. Raymond drew excellent houses as *Colonel Sellers* at the Brooklyn Theatre.

For the term of their appearance in "King Lear," Lawrence Barrett will receive $1,200 a week; E. E. Sheridan, $1,000; Frederick B. Warde, $500.

The interview, invented by the elder Bennett, was becoming more and more popular. THE SUN used it, not only as the vehicle of acquired information but sometimes as the envelope of humor. Take, for example, this bit, printed in 1875, but as fresh in style and spirit as if it were the product of a reporter of 1917:

INTERVIEWING VANDERBILT.

Another Reporter Comes Away Freighted with Valuable Information.

Commodore Vanderbilt was 81 years old yesterday. He spent the day in his Fourth avenue office, taking his usual drive in the afternoon. A SUN reporter visited him in the evening to inquire about a favorable time for selling a few thousands of New York Central.

"This," said the Commodore, slowly and solemnly, as he entered the drawing room, "is my birthday."

"Indeed!" said the reporter. "Do you think the preferred stock——"

"To-day," the Commodore interrupted. "I am 81 years old. I am stronger——"

"Is there any prospect of an immediate rise?"

"I have never gone into the late supper business," the Commodore answered, apparently not catching the drift of the question; "and I have always been a very temperate man. But how did you find out that this was my birthday?"

"You hinted at the fact yourself," the reporter replied. "Will the Erie troubles——"

"The Erie troubles will not prevent me from beginning my eighty-second year with a young heart and a clear conscience."

"And with the prospect of seeing a good many more birthday anniversaries?" the reporter asked.

"That, my dear boy," said the Commodore, "is one of those things that no fellow can tell about."

"Do you think that this is a good time to sell?"

"No, it's never a good time to sell after banking hours."

"Good evening!"

"Good evening! Drop in again."

(To be continued in next Sunday's SUN.)

RUSKIN ON HUN TRAITS.

RUSKIN in measuring the Germans in peace and war times gives the following in "Fors Clavigera":

"Blessing is only for the weak and merciful, and a German cannot be either; he does not understand even the meaning of the words. In that is the intense, irreconcilable difference between the French and German natures. A Frenchman is selfish only when he is vile and lustful; but a German, selfish in the purest states of virtue and morality. A Frenchman is arrogant only in ignorance, but no quantity of learning ever makes a German modest.

"Accordingly, when the Germans get command of Lombardy they burn St. Venice, steal their pictures (which they can't understand a single touch of) and entirely ruin the country, morally and physically, leaving behind them misery, vice and intense hatred of themselves wherever their accursed feet have trodden."

CLEOPATRA'S PEARL.

MOST persons know the story told of Cleopatra to illustrate her luxurious habits of living that she dissolved in her wine a precious pearl. No one seems yet to have questioned what must have been the effect upon the drink, but scientists scoff at the possibility of such solution.

The fact is pearls are not soluble in wine. The most powerful vinegar affects them slowly and never entirely dissolves them, for the organic matter remains behind in the shape of a spongy mass that is larger than the original pearl.